SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION SCHEME

Introduction

While **general classification schemes** such as DDC, LCC, and UDC cover all fields of knowledge, they are often not detailed enough for some highly specialised disciplines. This led to the development of **subject-specific** or **specialised classification schemes**.

A **subject-specific classification scheme** is one that focuses on the detailed organisation of information within a particular field or discipline. Such schemes are necessary because specialised areas like law, medicine, engineering, and religion require deeper and more precise subject analysis than general schemes can provide.

Examples of specialised classification schemes include:

Moys Classification Scheme for Law

National Library of Medicine (NLM) Classification for medicine

Colon Classification (CC) for multidisciplinary use

Bliss Bibliographic Classification (BC) for humanities and social sciences

Meaning and Purpose of Specialised Classification Schemes

A specialised classification scheme is a **custom-designed system** used to arrange and retrieve materials within a particular subject field. It is meant to:

1. Reflect the **terminology** and **structure** of that discipline.
2. Provide **depth of coverage** for subject areas not well represented in general schemes.
3. Facilitate **accurate retrieval** for researchers, scholars, and practitioners in that field.
4. Support **special libraries** or information centres that cater to a specific audience.

For example, a law library will not benefit much from DDC because DDC allocates only one division (340) for law. Moys Classification, however, provides extensive subdivisions that mirror the structure of legal systems and jurisdictions.

Moys Classification Scheme for Law

Origin

The **Moys Classification Scheme for Law** was developed by **Elizabeth M. Moys**, a British law librarian. The first edition was published in **1968**, specifically to address the weaknesses of DDC and LCC in handling legal materials.

Purpose

The main aim of the Moys scheme is to provide **a flexible and detailed arrangement for legal literature**, reflecting both **common law** and **civil law systems**. It allows law libraries to classify materials by jurisdiction, subject matter, and form.

Structure of the Scheme

The Moys scheme uses **letters** and **numbers** for notation, similar to the Library of Congress system.

It begins with **K** for Law as the main class.

Within class K, there are subdivisions for:

KA – Jurisprudence (Philosophy of Law)

KB – General and Comparative Law

KC – International Law

KD – Religious Legal Systems (e.g. Islamic Law)

KE–KN – National Legal Systems (e.g. KE – United Kingdom, KN – Nigeria)

KP – Public Law

KR – Private Law

KT – Procedural Law

KV – Administration of Justice

KZ – Forms and Precedents

Each class is further divided by **subject**, **jurisdiction**, and **form**.
For example:

KN340.N5 – Nigerian Contract Law

KP120.U6 – United States Constitutional Law

 Features of the Moys Scheme

1. **Subject-specific:** Designed solely for law libraries.
2. **Alphanumeric Notation:** Uses letters and numbers for concise representation.
3. **Jurisdictional Division:** Allows materials to be grouped by countries or regions.
4. **Compatibility with LCC:** Designed to complement the Library of Congress system.
5. **Flexibility:** Can be expanded as new legal subjects emerge.

 Advantages

1. Provides in-depth coverage of legal topics.
2. Reflects the logical structure of law.
3. Easy to integrate into cataloguing systems using LCC.
4. Widely used in Nigerian law libraries such as:

University of Lagos Faculty of Law Library

Nigerian Law School Libraries

Supreme Court Library, Abuja

Disadvantages

1. Limited to law and not applicable outside the field.
2. Requires specialised knowledge to use effectively.
3. Updates are less frequent than DDC or LCC.

National Library of Medicine (NLM) Classification

Origin

The **National Library of Medicine Classification** was developed by the **U.S. National Library of Medicine**. It was designed to classify literature in the **health and biomedical sciences**.

Structure

The NLM scheme uses **letters and numbers** similar to the LCC.
It begins with **QS–QZ** and **W–WZ** to represent various branches of medical science.

Major Divisions

Class Mark Subject Area

Class Mark	Subject Area
QS	Human Anatomy
QT	Physiology
QU	Biochemistry
QV	Pharmacology
QW	Microbiology & Immunology
QX	Parasitology
QY	Clinical Pathology
QZ	Pathology
W	General Medicine
WA	Public Health
WB	Practice of Medicine
WD	Diseases
WF	Respiratory System
WG	Cardiovascular System
WH	Haematology
WI	Digestive System
WJ	Urogenital System
WK	Endocrine System

Class Mark Subject Area

WL   Nervous System

WM   Psychiatry

WN   Radiology

WO   Surgery

WP   Obstetrics

WQ   Gynaecology

WR   Dermatology

WS   Paediatrics

WT   Geriatrics

WZ   Medical History & Biography

Features

1. **Highly Detailed:** Provides extensive breakdowns for every body system and disease.
2. **Alphanumeric Notation:** Uses letters for subjects and numbers for subdivisions.
3. **Flexibility:** Easily expandable to accommodate new discoveries.
4. **Integrates with LCC:** Complements the LC system since LCC covers only general medicine under class R.
5. **Used Globally:** Adopted by medical libraries, teaching hospitals, and research institutions worldwide.

Advantages

1. Detailed enough for medical professionals and researchers.
2. Allows logical arrangement and retrieval of medical materials.
3. Compatible with digital and online catalogues.

Disadvantages

1. Applicable only to medicine and health sciences.
2. Complex for non-medical staff.
3. Regular updates required due to rapid scientific development.

Other Examples of Specialised Schemes

1. **Colon Classification (CC):** Though general, it can be adapted to specific subjects using facet analysis.
2. **Bliss Bibliographic Classification (BC):** Often used in humanities and social science libraries.
3. **AgroVoc and AGRIS Classification:** Used for agricultural materials by FAO libraries.
4. **Islamic Classification Scheme (ICS):** Designed to organise Islamic knowledge and literature.

Importance of Specialised Classification Schemes

1. They provide **depth of coverage** within a discipline.

2. Ensure **accuracy** and **specificity** in subject representation.
3. Enhance **research efficiency** for subject experts.
4. Facilitate **standardisation** within professional fields.
5. Allow libraries to manage **discipline-specific** collections effectively.

Comparison Between General and Specialised Classification Schemes

Criteria	General Schemes (e.g. DDC, LCC)	Specialised Schemes (e.g. Moys, NLM)
Scope	Covers all fields of knowledge	Focuses on one field or discipline
Depth	Broad and general	Detailed and specific
Notation	Simple and universal	Complex and discipline-based
Use	Public, academic libraries	Special or professional libraries
Examples	DDC, LCC, UDC	Moys, NLM, AGRIS
Flexibility	Moderate	High within the subject area

Summary

Specialised classification schemes fill the gap left by general schemes by providing **precise and detailed subject representation**. The Moys scheme is best for law, NLM for medicine, and others exist for agriculture, religion, and the arts. They make retrieval faster, support professional practice, and promote the growth of disciplinary knowledge.